

REMARKS

This is a full and timely response to the outstanding final Office Action mailed November 27, 2006. Consideration and allowance of the application and pending claims are respectfully requested.

1. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants reiterate their appreciation that claims 4, 7-12, 18-24, 31-34, 39, and 40 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, claim 4 has been rewritten to include the limitations of its base claim. Therefore, claim 4 and its dependent claims (2-3 and 13-19) should be allowed. Also, claim 9 has been rewritten to include the limitations of its base claim. Therefore, claim 9 and its dependent claims (6-8 and 10-12) should be allowed. Also, claim 20 has been rewritten to include the limitations of its base claim. Therefore, claim 20 and its dependent claims (21-24) should be allowed. Claim 31 has been rewritten to include the limitations of its base claim. Therefore, claim 31 and its dependent claims (26-30 and 32-34) should be allowed. Additionally, claim 39 has been rewritten to include the limitations of its base claim. Therefore, claim 39 and its dependent claims (36-38 and 40) should be allowed.

In that it is believed that every rejection has been overcome, it is respectfully submitted that each of the claims that remains in the case is presently in condition for allowance.

2. Response To Rejections of Claims Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 13, 14, 25-30, and 35-37 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by *DeMeerleer* (U.S. Patent No. 6,402,299). As stated above, claims 2-4, 6-24, 26-34, and 36-40 have been indicated to be allowed over the cited art.

Claims 1, 5, 25, and 41-45 are canceled without prejudice, waiver, or disclaimer, and therefore, the rejection to these claims is rendered moot. Applicants take this action merely to reduce the number of disputed issues and to facilitate early allowance and issuance of other claims in the present application. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of these canceled claims in a continuing

application, if Applicants so choose, and do not intend to dedicate any of the canceled subject matter to the public.

3. Response To Rejections of Claims Under 35 U.S.C. §103

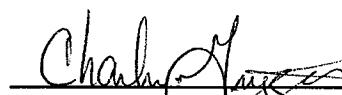
In the Office Action, claims 15-17 and 38 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over *DeMeerleer* in view of *Daggs* (U.S. Patent No. 5,422,667). As stated above, claims 2-4, 6-24, 26-34, and 36-40 have been indicated to be allowed over the cited art.

Claims 1, 5, 25, and 41-45 are canceled without prejudice, waiver, or disclaimer, and therefore, the rejection to these claims is rendered moot. Applicants take this action merely to reduce the number of disputed issues and to facilitate early allowance and issuance of other claims in the present application. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of these canceled claims in a continuing application, if Applicants so choose, and do not intend to dedicate any of the canceled subject matter to the public.

CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that all objections and/or rejections have been traversed, rendered moot, and/or accommodated, and that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application and all pending claims are hereby courteously requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned agent at (770) 933-9500.

Respectfully submitted,



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